WHY WILL YE DIE?

OR,

DIVINE SOLICITUDE FOR THE PERISHING.

Two Discourses,

ON LUKE XIX. 41—XI. 13,

DELIVERED IN THE

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, LANCASTER, PA.,

BY

REV. ALFRED NEVIN,

PASTOR.

PHILADELPHIA:
JOSEPH M. WILSON, S. W. CORNER NINTH AND ARCH STS.
1855.

Rev. Alfred Nevin:—

Dear Sir,—In your ministrations to the people to which we belong, you delivered two certain discourses, a short time since, on Luke, xix. 41 and xi. 13, the latter of which was repeated by special request. Those discourses were highly edifying to many who heard them, and the undersigned believe their publication would be productive of much good. They therefore respectfully ask you to furnish them with copies of the same for this purpose.

We remain very respectfully, your friends,

Hugh Andrews,
H. S. Gara,
Geo. S. Bryan,
Elisha Geiger,
John Millar,
Robert M'Clure,
H. B. Swarr,
Abm. W. Russel,
Charles M. Howell,
D. W. Patterson.

Lancaster, May 20th, 1855.

Lancaster, May 25th, 1855.

Messrs H. Andrews, H. S. Gara, G. S. Bryan, Elisha Geiger, and others:—

Gentlemen,—As, in your kind judgment, the sermons you specify in your note may more extensively subserve the end of their delivery by being placed in a printed form, I cheerfully comply with your request. They will not be less acceptable, I hope, either from some little expansion which I have given to them since they were preached, or because I allow them, as published, to retain the style which was deemed appropriate for them in the pulpit.

Faithfully yours,

ALFRED NEVIN.

JERUSALEM LAMENTED.

SERMON I.

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it."—Luke xix. 41

A visit to a city is generally attended with emotions of pleasure. There is a display of magnificence to be seen. There is an exchange of friendly salutations anticipated. There is excitement to be felt from contact with business prosecuted with intensest ardour and competition. There is the glow of feeling to be enjoyed which arises from the presence of a crowding, earnest, bustling multitude. There is, too, not unfrequently, the hope of gain cheering the heart, and kindling into greater brightness as it approaches the execution of the plans which have been projected for its realization. All the influences emanating from these various sources, combine to invest such an occasion with more than ordinary interest. Especially is this so, when the approach of the visiter produces a sensation of delight in the expectant population, and is greeted by them with unusual signals of welcome and honour.

The case before us, then, is an exception to this law of our nature. It is a singular exhibition of feeling as far as outward circumstances meet the eye, and is adapted by its strangeness to attract speciality of attention. There was a law which prohibited the Israelites the use both of horses and chariots of war, in order that in the absence of such an array of human strength, they might trust in no power but that of Jehovah, and in order that they might be prevented from indulging themselves in schemes of aggression upon other nations. In obedience to this law, the beast was an humble one which the man Christ Jesus rode as he was approaching Jerusalem, and yet there was much every way to produce in his mind a joyous excitement.

It was the only season of his earthly sojourn, that He is known to have enjoyed any kind of triumph. Poverty, reproach, and persecution had been his unvaried allotment, but now it seemed as if there was a dawn of peace and gladness for the Man of Sorrows, and as if those who had insolently repudiated his claims, were beginning to understand his errand to our world, and to discern his glory, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." The Holy Land, spreading out before him from the mount which he descended, was filled with vernal beauty and fragrance, and shining in the golden beams of an evening sun. The metropolis which he was about to enter in a more public manner than ever before, was teeming with myriads who were overjoyed with the thought of seeing him, hearing him, and beholding his miracles, and, as the feast of passover was at hand, the way-sides resounded with

shouting pilgrims on their journey to the place of sacred convocation, whilst "there was one long stream of music and merry hearts from Hermon to Zion." And all this anxious and delighted multitude lavished their acclamations and benedictions upon Him, around whose head so brilliant a halo of glory had recently been kindled by his raising of Lazarus from the dead. They scattered palm branches, and even their own garments before him on the way, and as he advanced they cried out in a transport of joy and adoration, "Blessed be the King who cometh in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." "When he was come nigh, even at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice, and praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works that they had seen."

Besides, Jerusalem was in sight. It could easily and distinctly be seen—the sacred city with its magnificent temple, its marble towers like mountains of snow reflecting the sunbeams, its massive gates overlaid with pure gold, the hosannas of exulting crowds crying, "Peace be within thy walls and prosperity within thy palaces," and "the voice of gladness that evening to be heard with peculiar melody, in view of happy meetings and blessed homes."

Nothing, then, seems to have been wanting, to fill the Redeemer with the spirit of exultation, as he gazed upon the beautiful and inspiring scene. But ah! when we look into his face for the beaming smile which that spectacle might have been expected to produce, as the natural and necessary reflection of itself, we find it, though ever clouded and furrowed with sorrow, now covered with deeper lines and darker shades, and exhibiting the most incontestable proof of the bitter grief which is melting his soul.

Amidst all his meek triumphs the peaceful monarch, instead of being elated, was exercised with the tenderest and deepest sensibility. He knew that the bright and flashing wave of applause which was then rolling around him, would soon be changed into one of dark, and dire, and deathful calamity. He foresaw that many of the multitude now crying, "Hosanna," would soon as loudly cry, "Crucify him, crucify him, his blood be upon us and our children." There rose before Him, as the answer to this dreadful imprecation, a series of desolating judgments, such as no nation had ever yet endured, and which should fall upon the people, from whom He was descended according to the flesh, and to whom He had with special interest uttered the warning of peril and offered the invitation of mercy. He saw the terrible siege of Jerusalem by the Romans, with all its attendant wo, and blood, and horror. He saw the expulsion of her inhabitants, the proud mockery of her enemies, and the fearful persecution and dispersion of those who had borne a name, once so venerable, but thenceforward to be hated and despised. He saw the city which was called "the perfection of beauty,"—"the joy of the whole earth,"—"the city of the great King," honoured as the seat of His worship, and favoured with the symbols of His presence, and signalized as the place where through long ages He had unfolded his purposes of mercy, and where the tribes were wont to go up, the tribes of the Lord unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord, for there were thrones of judgment, the

thrones of the house of David—this city, thus endeared by a thousand sacred associations, Jesus beheld, as a pile of ruins, her temple fired and razed to its foundations, her inhabitants scattered or slain, her gates sunk into the ground, her bars broken and destroyed, her palaces demolished, her king and her princes among the Gentiles, her law no more, and her prophets finding no vision from the Lord, and the barley growing in silent fields where so many crowding worshippers had thronged, and "the house of prayer unto all nations," supplanted by the tent which the barbarian's hand should build in the city of God.

More than this, the Saviour knew of the heavy judgments which were impending over the inhabitants of Jerusalem as sinners who had despised His ministry and set at naught His claims, and of the dismal doom awaiting the perpetrators of the national crime which should outpeer all other deeds of guilt—even his own murder. The world to come was all before Him, and "in its sullen gloom and endless weeping, he recognised many an one whose beaming face and sparkling eye lit up that evening's festival. As if already in the place of wo, He looked on many round Him, and though their voices were that moment merry, he knew that they would despise his blood, and hate His heavenly Father, and their present mirth made Jesus weep the more."

Behold, then, the summit of Olivet exhibiting at this hour, a scene of moral grandeur such as had never been witnessed in our world before! What a moving—mastering spectacle! The Son of God, though conscious of His royal state and dignity, yet manifesting it more in meekness and humility than in majesty and magnificence, and though having the near prospect of his own terrible sufferings to becloud and oppress his soul, yet losing sight of himself in his concern for others, and though surrounded with the indications of gladness and triumph, yet casting his eyes over the city spread out before him, and giving vent to his feelings in a flood of tears! "He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

If the infidelity of the Jews which led the Redeemer thus pathetically to lament their rejection of Him, and of the system of salvation which He revealed, is felt to be a difficulty; it may be satisfactorily accounted for by their blinding prejudices. There were, on the part of this people, most unreasonable conceptions entertained of the promised Messiah. They totally misapprehended the object of his mission and the nature of his kingdom. Receiving in a literal sense the lofty images in which both it and its Founder had been predicted, they had fallen into the expectation of a temporal Prince and kingdom, to which they were all the more inclined by the crumbling condition of their own polity. Hence they were not prepared to discern the glory of Immanuel through the cloud which an humble fortune had cast over him, or to appreciate the spiritual doctrine which he proclaimed. Elated with dreams of earthly greatness and dominion, they were not in an attitude to value a sceptre of righteousness, and a throne which was to be erected in the hearts of men, and an emancipation from the thraldom of sin, instead of deliverance from the Roman yoke. Hoping to be favoured with certain rights and privileges, which should give them an enviable elevation among the tribes and kindreds of the earth.

they were not ready for the announcement that the wall of partition was to be broken down, that Jews and Gentiles might be united as one body under one Head. Expecting to become rulers of the nations, with Jerusalem as their seat of empire, they were shocked to hear that the law of discipleship is one of submission and suffering, and that "all who live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution."

Not only, however, were the Jews at this time under the power of deep-rooted prejudices, but they were also characterized by great wickedness in which these prejudices took their rise, and from which, as a corrupt soil, they derived their strength and support. Verily must their moral condition have been deeply degraded, to elicit against them from the lips of love and meekness, such reproachful and opprobrious epithets, as "an evil and adulterous generation," and a "generation of vipers and serpents." Josephus, their own historian, thus testifies against them. "They not only trampled upon all that was sacred among men, but jested with Divinity itself, and made no more account of the oracles of the Prophets, than of so many dreams and fables." "It would be endless to run through the history of their iniquities, but to comprise all in little, I am persuaded that there never was so miserable a city, nor so barbarous a people."

What wonder then can it be, that the Gospel and its Author should meet with no better reception than they did among such a people? "How could the voluptuous Sadducee digest the doctrines of mortification and self-denial, of taking up the cross, and following the Captain of salvation through sufferings? How could the proud and haughty Pharisee condescend to be meek and lowly, and from worshipping God in show, learn to worship him in spirit and in truth? What methods could be taken to win those, who would neither "dance" with the "pipers," nor "mourn" with the "mourners,"—who found fault with the solitary and austere John, as "having a devil," and with the humane and sociable Jesus, as being a "glutton" and a wine-bibber?" What reason could prevail with them who would not listen to reason, who were self-willed and obstinate, and were, as Paul said of himself, "exceedingly mad" against those who differed from them? What light could penetrate that darkness which withstood the utmost means of conviction, and blasphemously ascribed the miracles plainly wrought by the power of God, to the power of the devil? The rejection of Christianity, therefore, by the multitude of the Jews, is not an argument against its credibility, grounded as this rejection was, not in a want of sufficient evidence to carry with it conviction, but in the want of a right state of heart to appreciate its accompanying proofs. The fault was not in the light, but in the condition of the eye, and in the medium of vision which had been vitiated by sin. This was the condemnation (the cause as well as the measure of it) that light had come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

And in this fact, let it be observed, have we the means of rectifying a vain opinion which some entertain, that had they lived in the times when Jesus was manifest in the flesh, they would have believed. The idea of such persons is, that had they been ear-witnesses of the words of the Great Teacher, and eye-witnesses of his works, in calming the

tempest, and raising the dead, and making the lame to walk, and changing the elements, not by process of chemistry but by a simple volition, they would have renounced all their scruples, and have believed and obeyed without doubt and without reserve. For this notion there is no basis or warrant. The evidence of our holy faith has steadily been strengthening, as through long centuries it has been subjected to every form of trial, and has gloriously triumphed over them all, whether coming from above us, amidst the stars, or beneath us, amidst the rocky depths, or from the past, with the musty records of other climes, and other customs, and other but false pretences to inspiration. This evidence has been spreading, too, as the chart of prophecy has been unrolled, pouring forth its clear and cumulative testimony in perfect or progressive fulfilment, so as to give us the advantage, in this respect, over those who lived in the days of Christ and his Apostles, inasmuch as several things which were then only foretold, are now fulfilled, and what were to them matters of faith, are become to us matters of fact and certainty. It is not, therefore, to be supposed that they would have been likely to yield to miracles, which were the great proofs of Revelation to the first ages, who are now able to withstand the evidence of miracles fully attested, and in addition, the evidence of prophecies fulfilled, which are the great proofs of Revelation to us upon whom the latter ages of the world are come. The "day" of the Gospel Dispensation has lost none of its brightness and beauty, at that period of it in which we are permitted to live. The Jews saw the miracles of our blessed Lord, and yet believed not. "Blessed are they," said He, whom the Jews despised and rejected, and to whom unbelief or disbelief is known to be not so much an intellectual defect as a moral disease,—"Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

The tears of the Redeemer teach us, that the cause of the destruction of impenitent sinners is in themselves, and not in the Divine Purpose as to any force which it exerts upon their will. Proof of this is deducible from the assurances which God has given, that He "would have all men to be saved," that He "has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live," and that He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" for if his decrees force sinners, and do violence to their liberty, then He will not have the sinner come to repentance, He is determined the sinner shall die, and hence contrary propositions are true. Reference might be had, also, with equal confidence for the same purpose, to the high ideas which God gives us of his mercy, when he prolongs the time of his patience, calling such prolongation, as he does, "riches of goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering;" for if his decrees force sinners, if they offer violence to their liberty, God would not be more merciful if he granted four-score years to a wicked man to repent in, than if he took him away suddenly on the commission of his first sin.

Let the proof of our proposition, however, be drawn from the case in hand. It may not be questioned that Jerusalem's destruction was a foreknown event, and that the arrangements of God were such as implied and assumed the rejection of Jesus by the Jews. This result

however, thus certain, as it must have been to be foreknown, did not prevent the omniscient and compassionate Saviour exhibiting to those who "received him not," the seals of his Messiahship, and bringing to bear upon them the promises and outward appliances of salvation. He diligently plied them with motives to repentance, and tenderly urged them to the acceptance of the offer of mercy. Neither did the fixity of the approaching doom prevent the tears of commiseration flowing over his dust-covered cheek, as he descended Olivet, and gazed upon the people whose hatred of the light kept pace with its increasing splendour,—the city for which Prophets had hung their harps on the willows, and on which angels had looked down with deep anxiety, and in which the Gospel had as often been rejected as it had been proclaimed. Nor, it must be added, did Jesus even intimate that anything else than their infidelity obstinately cherished, would expose them to the fury of the coming tempest. "If thou," (or in the optative form which the phrase admits,) "O that thou hadst known,"—"Often would I have gathered thee together, but ye would not,"—such was the complaint or lamentation he uttered, such the position he maintained in regard to the approaching issue. It was not, therefore, God's prediction that involved Jerusalem in ruin, but the sinfulness of the people. It was their voluntary rejection of the heavenly illumination which streamed its splendours around them, it was the crucifying Him who was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,"—*this* was the deed performed by "wicked hands," though preappointed, which consummated their crimes, which awoke the sleeping earthquakes, and made the sky above Palestine to be as brass, its rains to be as dust, its cities to be as sepulchres, and the only memorials of its faded magnificence, to be—tombs, wrecks and ruin.

And here, I hold, is, if not an exhibition of the reconcilableness of the Divine prescience or even predetermination with man's accountability as a free agent; at least a revelation of the fact that these two things may co-exist. It would be useless to deny that the subject is attended with difficulty to our view in our present state. We at once feel that the problem, how the certainty of a foreknown event can stand together with the possibility of avoiding it, is too mighty an one for a finite mind to grapple with successfully. How can it be that our uncontrolled and voluntary volitions and actions can be reconcilable with that pre-determination of all events, or that foreknowledge which renders them equally certain, which the Bible ascribes to the Moral Governor of the world,—this is a question which the wisest among men, perhaps, would acknowledge himself incompetent to solve.

But, then, what is the truth in regard to this matter as God has made it known? I answer in the language of another: "The fixed certainty of future events, and the invariable plan of action which exists in the mind of God, are abundantly revealed in Scripture. The whole system of prophecy rests upon this basis, that all the acts of created agents in all future times, have a present existence, a fixed certainty of taking place, in the Divine Mind. And these statements are in unison with the dictates of enlightened reason. It is impossible to conceive of an infinite Law Giver, the Maker and Sovereign of all things, without ascribing to him an all-comprehending view of all

events, a perfect control of all inferior agents, and a clear discernment of the end from the beginning. It is thus abundantly taught in the Bible, that all events which take place were certainly and unalterably fixed in the Divine Mind. The Bible also declares with equal plainness, that we are entirely and justly accountable, that we act freely in view of motives, and that the Divine decrees put no restraint at all upon our choice and determinations. And every man knows this is absolutely true. In every mind there is a consciousness of complete freedom of purpose and action. And however objectors may argue upon this subject, the pangs of remorse which follow crime, clearly prove that the transgressor has an inward assurance he has acted freely, voluntarily and wickedly. Thus the predestination of all events, and the perfect freedom of human agency, are clearly and fully revealed."

Now what if we cannot grasp this revelation so as fully to understand it? What if we cannot conceive how men can act freely in doing what there was a fixed certainty of,—a certainty based either upon purpose or foreknowledge, which, as we have hinted, amounts in the case to the same thing? What if we cannot perceive the consistency of these two things, that known to the Omniscient God is the eternal condition of every man, and that yet those who perish, perish only by reason of their sins, and the perverseness of their will in rejecting the proffered deliverance? What if we cannot comprehend how the failure to escape punishment which appears so pre-determined, that to suppose it remitted, is to suppose God's plans thwarted,—how such failure can be lamented with an earnestness drawn from a past possibility of such escape? I maintain that such incompetency on our part requires not, neither warrants, the rejection of the truth in question, for the foundation on which it rests, is not our ability to understand it, but the fact that it is revealed. This fact meets us in Jerusalem doomed, and Jerusalem lamented for bringing upon itself the doom which through long centuries had been predicted. The principle involved is as applicable to individuals as to nations. And herein, I believe, is furnished as clear a solution as we may expect in this world of limited perceptions, of the consistency of God's purposes with man's free agency. Never have any of the numerous and ingenious efforts which have been made, to demonstrate that decree is not fatal necessity, conducted the mind to the point which it reaches through the tears of Jesus, and through those pathetic expostulations, those powerful entreaties, and those earnest exhortations, with which the Bible abounds for the reclamation of the greatest sinners.

Here, then, we ought to desist from our endeavour to comprehend this great mystery, a full demonstration of which is only to be looked for in another and higher state of existence. It is a depth which we cannot fathom. We may enter into

> "reasonings high,
> Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
> Fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute,"

and yet we will

> "find no end in wandering mazes lost."

"Secret things belong unto the Lord, but the things which are revealed, to us and our children." I cannot explain the hypostatical union, or the union of the Divine and human natures in the person of Immanuel, and yet I trust in him as the God-man, and the only Mediator. I cannot fathom the depth of the doctrine of a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead, "and these three the same in substance, and equal in power and glory," yet I believe it because "thus it is written." I cannot even understand my own compound being,—how matter and spirit co-exist in my mysterious personal constitution. I cannot therefore doubt, merely because it is inscrutable, that when the clouds of vengeance were ready to burst upon Jerusalem, there was reason as well as room for the Saviour's tears, because her children would not be gathered under his gracious protection. More than this, I feel at liberty with this example before me, to address my fellow-creatures as responsible beings, and as not placed under an invincible moral constraint which allows of no freedom. I feel called upon, also, to cherish and manifest the deepest and tenderest interest for their salvation even to the last. And, Oh! what is it but trifling with their immortality, for men to spend their time in speculations about Divine decrees and human agency, whilst failing to act under the promise that "whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!" A weeping Redeemer summons them at once to put forth all their strength, to consider their ways, to forsake their evil thoughts, to flee to the refuge which has never been closed against any who sought its protection in the appointed way, and that same weeping Redeemer calls them to this course of penitence, and prayer, and faith, to pursue it with all the ardour of one convinced that he cannot perish except by his own fault, and confident that unless he fits himself for destruction, his eternity will not be an existence of darkness and desolation.

The tears of Jesus afford encouragement. There was another occasion on which He wept. The family of Bethany whom he had often visited in their prosperity, and whose cordial hospitality had been extended to him, had met with a sore bereavement. The cloud of sorrow had gathered over their dwelling, and cast its dark shadows upon their hearts. A loved brother and relative had closed his eyes in death, and when the Saviour reached the house of affliction, he yielded to tearful sympathy with the stricken ones, at the tomb of his deceased friend. Tender, touching scene! Such reflections as these, we may well suppose, arose at that moment in his compassionate mind. "How many, alas! how many of my future followers, like these of Bethany, shall hereafter be afflicted, and in the same dreadful degree, at a time when I, their Saviour and their friend, am removed from this terrestrial state of things? They shall call upon me when the general laws of my Father's providence forbid me to answer: they shall weep when I must not dry their tears. Present as I now am with these children of affliction, consoling their sorrows with my pity, which I shall shortly remove by my power, to whom shall they fly for comfort and succour in my absence? Who then shall heal the wounds of groaning friendship, of brotherly, filial, or conjugal affection? Be the tears I now shed their future balm: let my disciples yet unborn,

feel their salutary influence. Faith shall apply them still fresh to their bosoms, and they shall rest assured that he who once wept with their afflicted brethren upon earth, shall ever compassionate their own calamities in heaven."

In *this* instance, however, it was not for friends, but for enemies, Jesus wept. It was for Jerusalem that killed the prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto her, though upon messages of grace,—Jerusalem, upon whom should come all the righteous blood of the Prophets through a length of near four thousand years from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias.—Jerusalem, the den of those murderers, who, he well knew, would in a few days imbrue their hands in his blood,—Jerusalem, that had abused so many mercies, been incorrigible under so many chastisements, deaf to so many invitations,—over such a city it was, Jesus wept when he came near to it.

Nor did this pity, thus displayed, cease, as is known, after he had suffered death by her bloody hands, for after his resurrection he commanded his Apostles to make one more trial with her obstinate children. "Go," said He, "and preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." O what an exhibition of mercy! It was as if Jesus had said, "Ungrateful though that city has been, where so much effort has been made in vain, and where I have just been crucified with cruel hands, yet do not give them up, try once more to gather them under my wings, yea, let them have the very first offer of mercy. Invite *them* to me as a Saviour, who nailed me to the cross as a malefactor and a slave. Let them have the first refusal of the gospel, let *them* that struck the rock drink first, if they will, of its refreshing streams, and they that drew my blood, be welcome to its healing virtue. Tell them, that though they despised my tears which I shed over them, and imprecated my blood to be upon them, it was for their sakes I shed both, that by my tears I might soften their hearts towards God, and by my blood I might reconcile God to them. Tell them that the sufferings which they have called me to endure, instead of filling me with vindictive thoughts, have left me willing to communicate to them the salvation which my passion has secured. Tell the poor wretch, if you meet him, who thrust the spear into my side, that there is another way, and a better way, of coming to my heart, and that if he will repent, and look upon Him whom he has pierced, I will cherish him in that very bosom he has wounded, and seat him beside me in heaven, on the throne which I have won. Tell the wretch who gave me the vinegar and gall, that he may drink forever of the river of life pure as crystal, and those who cast lots for my vesture, that they may receive from me the beautiful garments of salvation. Tell the wretch who scarified my temples with the diadem of thorns, that he may wear a brilliant golden crown of glory which fadeth not away. Tell those whose hands placed the mocking superscription above my head, that they may reign forever as kings and priests unto God, and those who taunted me in my bitter agony, saying, "He saved others, himself he cannot save; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross," —tell them that I have finished my expiation, that I have triumphed in the conflict, that I conquered when I fell, that their victory was mine, and that now the very sufferings which they ridiculed with their

sneers, and increased by their reproach, may avail for their pardon, and invest them with a title to the exalted dignity and enduring felicity of heaven.

We say, then, there is encouragement in these tears of Jesus, and just such encouragement, O sinner, as your case requires. What if you cannot be said to have killed the Prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto you, yet is it not true that you have turned away from the message and the messenger with cold indifference? Have you not withstood the motions of God's Spirit, rejected the invitations of his Gospel, and closed your ear to the voice of his Providence? Do not the words "*How often*" call forth an echo and answer from a thousand points of your history, and remind you of expostulations, and warnings, and threatenings, and mercies, and griefs, and sermons, and Sabbaths, and privileges, each one of which was a distinct call from the Lord Jesus, and all of which as accumulated and darkened by the lapse of years, furnish a spectacle of spurned authority, and abused compassion, and spiritual recklessness, which, under the light that falls upon them from the judgment throne and an ensuing eternity, cannot be contemplated without a shudder? Is it not true that the very privileges which God has showered upon you, have, through your misimprovement of them, become the means of aggravating your guilt, and desolating your moral nature, so that what was adapted to soften, has hardened, and what was fitted to give light, has only increased darkness, and so that the pew in which the glorious Gospel is heard, is the witness which you have most reason to dread in the final day of disclosure and decision? Have you not, I ask, trampled under foot the blood of the Saviour, and acted with those who feel no sorrow at the remembrance of his sufferings, but by their unbelief, and worldliness, and vanity, "Crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame?"

With such guilt, then, resting upon your soul, you need the strongest reason for hope that your cry for mercy will not be fruitless, and such assurance you have. It beams upon you from an eye, which, however aggravated your sins, would sparkle in affection over you, if it saw you weeping for yourself, turning your face as a pilgrim towards Zion, and receiving the grace, which though so dearly bought, has been so obstinately despised. It beams upon you from the eye of Him who wept for others, notwithstanding the bitter sorrows that awaited himself, and the deep agony and anguish which he was so soon to endure.

"He thought not of the death that he should die—
He thought not of the thorns he knew must pierce
His forehead—of the buffet on the cheek—
The scourge—the mocking homage, the foul scorn!
Gethsemane stood out beneath his eye
Clear in the morning sun, and there, he knew,
While they who "could not watch with him one hour"
Were sleeping, He should sweat great drops of blood,
Praying the "cup might pass." And Golgotha
Stood bare and desert by the city wall,
And in its midst, to his prophetic eye,
Rose the rough cross, and its keen agonies

Were number'd all—the nails were in his feet—
Th' insulting sponge was pressing on his lips—
The blood and water gushing from his side—
The dizzy faintness swimming in his brain—
And, when his own disciples fled in fear,
A world's death-agonies all mixed in his!
Ay! he forgot all this. He only saw
Jerusalem,—the chosen—the loved—the lost!
He only felt that for her sake his life
Was vainly given, and, in his pitying love
The sufferings that would clothe the heavens in black
Were quite forgotten. Was there ever love,
In earth or heaven, equal unto this?"

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it." *These tears were awful and foreboding.* There is much in the condition of cities, when spiritually contemplated, to awaken deep sensibility in the pious heart. Everywhere has the gospel difficulties to encounter, but it is undeniable that the obstacles to its progress are less numerous and potent in villages and rural districts, than in cities and large towns. Far stronger is the likelihood, humanly speaking, that the mind will be led to receive the truth, and to live in communion with God, in the quiet village, where there is time for meditation and worship, and where nature is constantly exerting her elevating influence upon the heart, and calling upon it to adore its bountiful and benignant Creator, than in the city where vice extensively prevails in its producing causes and sad effects, where business presses with unremitting demand, where pride and poverty both have their strongest temptations, and where the whole system of things strongly tends to hurry and hollowness, to superficial acquaintance with one's self and with others, and to the subordination of the eternal future to the life that now is. A city, too, unites in itself the extremes of population. On the one side are the low, and sunken, and degraded, whom the gospel cannot reach, and on the other side are the gay, and giddy, and godless, for whom the gospel has no attraction. It is, therefore, but a record such as might have been expected, that Jesus, whilst he met with eminent success in preaching in numerous country villages, and among the hamlets of the poor, yet encountered peculiar obstacles in Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin, and pre-eminently in Jerusalem, and it may not be wondered at that any one who sympathizes with the Son of God, feels an emotion of sorrow rising in his bosom, as he gazes upon a teeming population among whom the difficulties of salvation, mighty at best, are greatly multiplied and magnified.

Besides, a city is calculated in another view, to stir our feelings with painful interest. We cannot stand and look upon it from an adjacent eminence, with its crowded streets and compact dwellings, and reflect that in at most a few ages, under the destructive influence of time, its entire aspect will be changed, its gardens will be wasted, its habitations will have mouldered to ruin, its places of amusement and employment will be deserted, echo itself will be startled by the foot which breaks the silence that has long reigned in its halls of feast and song, and all that was sublime in conception, and graceful in execution, will

disappear, leaving but the melancholy fragments of ruined grandeur, with the still more melancholy traces of a perished population,—on such a scene as this, exhibiting to us in touching colours, the frailty of the glory even of collective man, the wreck of his hopes, and the very monuments of his power converted into the mockery of his weakness, we cannot look, even in prospect, without having our spirits overcast with a cloud of sorrow. And in this view, we may believe, there was produced in the Saviour, as he foresaw the terrific calamities which were to fall upon Jerusalem, all the tender compassion which could be expected from the most perfect humanity and benignity.

It was, however, neither merely nor mainly this that called forth the Redeemer's tears. It was more—far more than the sacking of the city, the destroying of magnificent buildings, that were all of perishable material, and the mangling of flesh over which the worm was otherwise shortly to have had dominion. Just as his words to the people—"I would have gathered you as the hen her chickens under her wings," did not mean that he would have been a temporal Prince and Saviour to them, which he so earnestly declined and disclaimed, asserting to the last that his kingdom was not of this world, so is it evident that the things belonging to their peace, over their ignorance of which he lamented, were not the things pertaining to their continued amity with the Roman state, but to their peace with heaven. It was over the alienation of men's minds from God, their disaffection to the only means of recovery, their indifference to the time of their visitation, and their consequent subjection to Divine wrath, that Jesus wept.

Now it is affecting to see a man weep, and especially a great man. We would naturally suppose that something vast and momentous was necessary to move to tears men of such mighty minds as a Bacon or a Newton. Mark, then, the tremendous import—the fearful significance of the tears of the Son of God! Even from the low point of observation which *we* occupy, and through the hazy atmosphere that surrounds us, the contemplation of eternal wreck and ruin, is calculated to move our nature to its highest capacity for sorrow. An immortal spirit floating onward through an existence which no geometry can measure, no arithmetic can calculate, no intellect can grasp,—its power of discerning truth only employed to assure it of its endless perdition, its memory only serving as a storehouse for the materials of anguish, its conscience awaked from the slumber of an earthly existence to scare the mind with images of deeper wo and more insufferable torment, its passions, which it was the business of a life-time to indulge, now doomed to an eternity of denial, and above it "the sword drawn from the thigh of the most Mighty," and beneath it, the flame which has been kindled by his angry breath,—such a destiny we cannot contemplate but with the workings of profoundest grief. Oh! what heaviness oppresses us, when we turn away from the sight of men immersed in business, and devoted to pleasure, yet unreconciled to God, and read those startling and stunning announcements,—"If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries,"—"He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two

or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace."

But the Saviour possessed a different power and position from ours for judging of such a destiny. He was with the Father when the "everlasting fire" was "prepared for the devil and his angels." He saw the Divine wrath dart its lightning into the ingredients of sin and kindle them into a devouring flame, and the hand of inflexible Justice forge the heavy chains, which the heirs of unabated misery were to wear for ever. He was present with Him, also, when the soul was created, and knew its immeasurable capacity for enjoyment or suffering,—knew how joyfully it could bask under the pure light of its Maker's countenance, or how it might tremble, and droop, and toss, with unwasting agony, in a world of darkness, where the bow of promise no longer shines amidst the storm, where hope never spreads its bright wings, where sympathy is unknown, and where the penalty of rejecting Heaven's greatest gift is to be endured, as an insulted and Omnipotent God "makes known the power of his wrath."

Those tears, therefore, which Jesus shed, are, we repeat, fearfully significant. They had a meaning which ought to make men feel, if they have hearts to quake and flesh to quiver. They tell us that there is a destruction infinitely more to be dreaded than that which the Roman eagles could threaten or achieve. They assure us that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. They show us that a soul lost,—lost for ever by its own obstinacy, lost amidst the means of salvation, and covered with the guilt of God dishonoured, Jesus rejected, his atonement slighted, his righteousness refused, and his Spirit grieved, is something divinely, infinitely pitiable.

Listen, then, O sinner, to the tears of Jesus! How can you resist their appeal? I would expect to see you moved with deepest sensibility if I had only pointed you to Christian friends weeping, as they must do, over your perilous condition,—if I had only opened the door of their closets, and said, "There is the father who smiled on you in infancy, or the mother that clasped you in her arms with fondest embrace, or the angel-sister whose heart from earliest childhood has anticipated your every wish, weeping over your folly, and lamenting your danger." But how much more reasonable is such expectation, since I have spoken to you of "Immanuel, God with us?"

Listen, then, we earnestly urge you, to his tears, for they speak with most pungent and most pathetic eloquence. Sad and solemn are the lessons which they teach. They tell you that some may share a Saviour's tears who never profit by his blood. They ask you if you have well considered the question of loss and gain, as it is interwoven with your present transient existence so soon to issue in a world of retribution. They tell you that indifference to danger is no security against it, neither is gayety any evidence that your future shall not be one of starless gloom. They tell you that you may be in the midst of mercy, and surrounded with the means of grace, but mercy and grace so near, and yet rejected, only make your case more lamentable. They tell you, and it is a fearful assurance, that somewhere in your

path there is a point, a "now," in which the things belonging to your peace,—your spiritual and eternal salvation, will be hidden from your eyes, the rejected light will shine with feebler ray, the insulted Spirit will depart, the curtain will fall, and the pleading voice of mercy will be silent. And yet, O blessed thought! they tell you that the love of the Redeemer passeth knowledge, that he came into the world not to condemn it, but to save it, and that if he weeps over those who are "ready to perish," He will rejoice over every penitent who flees to him by faith for shelter from the impending wrath and the approaching tempest.

Shall these tears, then, we ask again, (for when Jesus weeps there should be importunity on their part who pray men in his stead to be reconciled to God,)—shall these warm, gushing tears of the sorrowing Saviour flow for you in vain? Shall his pity for you exceed your pity for yourselves? Shall the time ever come, which may soon come, when you shall remember that you were entreated to live, and would not, that this entreaty was enforced by a pathos which no human tones or terms could wield, and now—now no more for you the Sabbath morn ushers in its golden beams and spreads abroad its precious invitations, no longer the voice of prayer can reach the mercy-seat, no longer the day of probation lasts, for the sceptre of pardon is eternally withdrawn, and no longer the heavenly gates stand open for your reception, for they have been closed and barred by a purpose which knows no change.

Shall, I ask you, your eternity be one of weeping over the city of our God as lost to you forever?

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou standest out before us as a witness that Jesus is more than willing to save, and yet that the grace so dearly bought, may be despised, so as to be converted into the fiercest indignation!

"Unhappy city, hadst thou known,—
Then were thy peace secure,
But now the day of grace is gone,
And thy destruction sure.

And can mine eyes without a tear,
A weeping Saviour see?
Shall I not weep his groans to hear,
Who groaned and died for me?

Blest Jesus, let those tears of thine
Subdue each stubborn foe,
Come, fill my heart with love divine,
And bid my sorrows flow."

THE PATERNAL CHARACTER OF GOD.

SERMON II.

"If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" LUKE xi. 13.

THE Holy Spirit is a Person, and not, as some have supposed, a mere quality or property of Deity. This is plain from the Scriptures. Personal properties and works are ascribed to Him. He is said to have understanding and wisdom. Affections are figuratively ascribed to Him: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." He is also represented as teaching, leading, guiding, convincing, renewing, speaking, showing, calling, sending, and making intercession—descriptions which cannot, with the least correctness, be applied to any but an actually existing person.

Equally evident is it, from the same source, that the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person. Divine perfections are ascribed to him, such as eternity, omnipresence, and omniscience. Blaspheming Him is declared to be a sin, an unpardonable sin. He is expressly called God: "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" said Peter to Ananias; immediately adding, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." In our Lord's command, also, to his apostles, to "disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," as well as in the usual form of benediction, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you," the same honours are paid to the Spirit as to the other divine Persons, which would be blasphemy, if He were not a divine Person, or truly and properly God.

Now this being true, there is a certain sense in which the blessed Spirit is, to any creature, incommunicable. Thus regarded, He is not susceptible or capable of any sort of transfer, such as the word "giving" imports. We refer to that mutual in-being of the sacred Persons of the Godhead, which is natural and necessary, and which is most peculiar to themselves. There is, however, another sense in which it may be predicated of the Spirit that He may be given. This idea is actualized, when, not by that necessity of His nature by which He fills all space, but in His free, official presence, He is imparted to the believer, to dwell in him, and to be the fountain of gracious communications, influences, and effects. It is of this donation the Saviour speaks in the text.

Of the importance and desirableness of the Holy Spirit in this character, and for this purpose, but little need be said. This blessing is the great promise of the gospel dispensation, and stands nearly in the

same relation to us that the coming of the Messiah did to the pious Jews. Jesus, before his manifestation in our nature, was the burden of the promises, the pre-eminent object of expectation, the hope of Israel, but after his incarnation, the gift of the Spirit became so. Hence it was that Christ, after his resurrection, exhibited this gift to the faith of his disciples, as emphatically the promise of the Father, which they were to receive at the distance of a few days. Hence it was, also, that the Apostle Peter, in his sermon on the Pentecostal occasion, which his Lord had designated, called upon his hearers to repent, assuring them, for their encouragement, that they should "receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise was to them and to their children, and to all that were afar off, even as many as the Lord their God should call." This assurance assumed the giving of the Holy Ghost to be *the* promise, which virtually comprehended in itself the sum of the gospel. The Apostle Paul places this gift in a similar light when he tells us that "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles," for in what that blessing consists, he informs us by adding, "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit by faith." He does this, also, where he speaks of it as cause for rejoicing, that he no more knew Christ after the flesh, as this knowledge was viewed in comparison with that inward, vital, spiritual union with Him, by which the whole frame of the new creation comes to spring up in the soul, and which he describes by saying, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new."

It will be recollected that our Saviour regarded this gift as more than sufficient to compensate his own longer abode among his disciples. "It is expedient for you," said He, "that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." It could not be expedient to part with a greater good for a less, nor could it be said to be an expedience to part with an equal good for an equal. If, therefore, it was expedient that Christ should go, that the Spirit might come, *that* must have been, in His esteem, a good superior to his mere bodily presence.

This great truth of the unspeakable importance of the Spirit's presence is everywhere, indeed, in the Gospel, brought to our view. Nothing else than this can be inferred from His being styled *the Spirit of promise*, *that Spirit of promise*, *the Spirit so often promised*, phrases which obviously imply, that in the communication of him, the promises of God so centre, that He may be considered as the substance of them all. And this inference is, if possible, strengthened by a reference to the fact, that in the parallel place to the text, (Matt. vii. 11,) the expression runs, "give *good things* to them that ask Him," thus intimating, as the terms illustrate one another, that the Holy Spirit is the best gift of God to those that have received the truth as it is in Jesus, and comprehends all things which are truly and essentially good for them.

How shall we adequately exhibit the importance of the Spirit's reception? Without him all religion is dead, mere form, at best. It is under His illumination that the true nature and excellency of Christ's religion is understood. It is by Him those doubts, and scruples, and

cavils must be silenced, which a creature so proud, and, at the same time, so ignorant as man is, is ever apt to make against divine truths. It is by His influence alone, we can be enabled to say that "Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." It is by His power that regeneration is effected, for the renewed soul is "that which is born of the Spirit;" man, fallen and feeble as he is, cannot in his utmost reach, rise above morals, decency, and external integrity, and work for himself a creation. It is by Him that knowledge is imparted, for it is on this account He is called "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation." It is by Him that the marvellous light is made to shine, which scatters the darkness that hangs upon the eye of the sinner, reveals to him his relations to God and eternity, and brings him under a deep, realizing sense of truths which he had often read and heard before, but had as often heard and read in vain. It is by Him that faith is produced, for "we," says the Apostle, "having the same Spirit of faith,"—the same with David, whom he quotes,—"believe, and therefore speak." It is by His agency that love is enkindled, that pure and holy affection by which the soul unites with God, becomes devoted to Him, and enjoys solace in the consciousness of His favour. It is by Him that hope is implanted in the heart, for Christians are said to abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. It is by Him that the fear of the Lord is made an active and controlling principle, for He is called "the Spirit of the fear of the Lord which rests upon Him who is the Rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch growing out of his roots," and in this character he is given to all who are united to the Saviour. The graces of religion are declared to be his "fruits,"—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance." In like manner all the exercises of the new creature are attributed to Him. It is through the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body, and it is by walking in the Spirit, and being led by the Spirit, that we lead a holy life, or walk in the way of the divine precepts. It is to Him we sow, that the harvest of life everlasting may be reaped by us; it is by Him we pray, when we pray aright, for such supplication is called "praying in the Holy Ghost;" and it is by Him we worship, when this is done acceptably, for such service is described as "worshipping God in spirit and in truth."

I must only add, in a summary way, that our dependence on the Spirit's agency is absolute and universal. It is He that breaks the slumber of our death in trespasses and sins, rolls away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and bids us come forth. To Him we are indebted for the maintenance of our new life, for we are said to "live in the Spirit," as if the soul had its very situation in a region of life created by Him for it, above the pestilential atmosphere of this rebellious world. To Him we owe our comforts, for the believer's consolations in this world of trouble and sorrow, are called "the consolations of the Holy Ghost." From Him comes our sanctification, for it is from this, the great design of His office, that He takes his title, Holy Spirit, and not because holiness pertains to Him in any superior degree, as one of the persons of the adorable Trinity. It is from Him we receive whatever "strength in our souls" we need, in order to "all long-suffering with joyfulness," to resist temptation, to overcome the

world, and to meet death with hope. It is He that is the very "earnest of our inheritance," the foretaste and first-fruits of our future blessedness; for it is by Him the things are revealed which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which have not entered into the heart of man. By Him, also, is it that the eyes of our understanding must be enlightened, that we may "know the hope of our calling, and the riches of the glory of our inheritance among the saints." And who shall say that the felicity of heaven, how much soever it may depend upon external situation, or the state of our minds, will not likewise, in an eminent degree, arise from the immediate influences of the Holy Comforter? How else shall we interpret that saying of our Lord, "the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life?"

"If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?

There is nothing more deeply founded in truth than the assumption here made. All creatures, by an instinct of their nature, are characterised by tenderness to their young, and this propensity rises in strength, according as the order of being is more noble in which it is found, until it culminates in man, and shows itself in him, as, perhaps, the most ardent and forceful of his affections. Man will not turn away with an unfeeling heart and an unopened hand, from the necessities and entreaties of his offspring. There may, indeed, be occasions on which a parent cannot minister gratification or relief. Thus was it with Hagar in the wilderness, when, her bread being consumed, and the bottle of water spent, she cast her child under one of the shrubs, that she might not see its death, and went and sat over against him, and lifted up her voice and wept. Thus was it with the parents of Moses, when the alternative presented to them was, to see him murdered, or to lay him in the little ark in the flags by the river's brink, that he might be entrusted to the mercy of the winds and the waves. Thus was it, also, in the case of the Shunamite's son, whom neither his touching complaint to his father,—"My head, my head,"—nor his being carried to his mother's lap, could deliver from the fatal malady with which he had been seized.

But where it is possible, or at all proper, the parent will satisfy the demands of his children. "For them," says one who sustained and adorned this relation, "for them he will make the largest surrenders of ease, and time, and fortune. He will compass sea and land in quest of provision for them, and for their sakes nerve himself against the buffeting of all the elements, at one time adventurously ploughing the ocean in their behalf, and at another, living for years in the exile and estrangement of a foreign clime, with naught to soothe him in the midst of his fatigues, but the imagery of his dear and far-distant home. It is the strength of this family affection by which the great society of mankind is upholden, made up as it is of families. It is this which nourishes them in childhood, which counsels and cares for them in youth, and which, even after the perversities or the losses of their manhood, welcomes them back again to the roof of their nativity, and throws them, as before, on the yet unquelled and inextinguishable

kindness of the parents who gave them birth, and who, even in the winter frost of their now declining years, and perhaps in the hardship of their declining circumstances, still find the love of offspring all alive and warm in their aged bosoms." Thus it is with earthly parents,—so strong, so enduring is this propensity of their nature, that it will prompt them to any reasonable liberality which will promote the happiness of their children, if it rise not to such control over them, that they will say when death has carried them away, even though they have been rebellious and profligate, "Would God, I had died for thee, O my son, my son!"

This is true of parents, also, notwithstanding their depravity, which cleaves to them, and which blinds their judgments, and makes them defective in moral purity, and which tends to make them weary through repeated provocations, and selfish, so that they shall feel averse to the self-denial to which they have often to be subjected, that the wants of their children may be supplied. "If ye being evil," says Christ, and we must lay great stress on this supposition, if we would fully grasp the truth presented. Men will exercise affection towards their offspring, even though they themselves are under the power of sin to such an extent, as not to recognise or feel their obligations to the universal Parent to whose family they belong, and as not to learn from what they expect from their children in return, what is expected from them, far more rightfully too, in the form of gratitude, love, and obedience, by the "Father of lights and of mercies, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift." They will be true, in this respect, to the relation which stretches from them to others, but false to the relation which reaches down from God to them, notwithstanding this higher relation which they sustain as children, gives all its support to their relation as parents, inasmuch as, unless God in the plenitude of his bounty blessed them, they could not possibly bless their families dependent on their care. Thus does sin involve men in manifest contradiction,—thus crooked do our ways become in departing from the living God. We feel ourselves bound to the spheres in which we have been appointed to move, yet practically deny our allegiance to the centre of the system to which we belong, and around which all inferior relations were intended to revolve, deriving from it their life, their law, and their meaning.

Now from the parental relation thus blooming and fruitful of kindness in the wilderness of the human heart, notwithstanding the unfriendly soil in which it exists, and the blighting atmosphere of evil influences with which it is surrounded, the Saviour reasons up to the Father of all, to demonstrate his willingness to give the Spirit. He gives us a shaded back-ground, that the picture may strike us the more favourably. He lays the broadest and deepest foundation for our confidence in the liberality of our Father in heaven. Who does not feel the tender and touching allusion that is made? Whose heart is not moved with sensibility, as memory bears him back to the old homestead, that is identified in his recollections with all that is gentle, and loving, and kind? Who can forget the parent's eye that ever beamed with affection, and the parent's hand that was ever ready to meet each uttered want? Who does not remember how readily each urged ne-

eessity was relieved for him, by the guides and guardians of his childhood? The Saviour's imagery, then, assures us, that there is a fondness which far surpasses theirs, now beekoning and beaming upon us from heaven. This is the eneouragement which it gives us, "that whatever freedom of aeeess a son has to an earthly father, to ask for the neeessaries of life, the children of God in applying to Him for spiritual blessings have more, beeause their wants are greater, because he who gives is wiser and better, and more willing to bestow, because he has pledged himself by the word of his promise, and because the very eireumstanees of the several natures of God and man, in their relation to eaeh other, ereate the moral neeessity for God to give, for if an earthly parent answer the eravings of an earthly ehild, mueh more will it be the ease, that when a finite being, bowed down with a sense of want and weakness, and guilt, eomes before his heavenly Father, and asks those good gifts whieh his direful neeessity demands, mueh more will He answer. It eannot be, that the perishing soul of man should plead for pardon, renewing grace, and Infinite Goodness refuse to give. What an earthly father will seareely ever fail to do, though he is evil, God will never fail to do, because he is good."

There are three eonsiderations, as it seems to us, from whieh the Friend of Sinners intended the argument thus presented, to derive its force.

God is the Fountain of natural affection. From Him all the kindness, and pity, and eompassion, and love, have proeeeded, which have flowed through all the sueeessive generations of the world. Not a parent has ever felt his heart entwined around his children, as being himself multiplied,—not a Jaeob ever pined away under his separation from a Joseph or a Benjamin,—not a Rachel ever wept diseonsolately over her frozen treasures,—not a mother ever lost sight of herself in her eoneern for her ehild, as did the woman of Canaan, who said to the great Physician, "O Lord, thou Son of David, have merey on *me*, my daughter is grievously afflieted,"—not a veteran sire has ever greeted with tears of joy a returning profligate son, who was not indebted for the feeling thus manifested, to Him who turneth the parents unto their children.

Affection, therefore, must be coneeived of as in God as its highest original, and as its proper and native seat. There is an illimitable fountain baek of all these sparkling streams which are threading and gladdening our earth, a blasted heritage though it be. God, also, in the light of this truth, that the souree is greater than the streams which flow from it, represents Himself as exereising this feeling as He intends it to be exereised by those to whom it is eommunieated. We have this representation in the assurance,—"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him,"—an assuranee, however, it must be remembered, only denoting resemblance and not equality, for no one parent's pity ean bear a greater proportion to that of the infinite God, than a mote to a mountain, or a drop to an oeean.

Can it then be, (the Saviour would say,) that He who is the very spring of kindness is destitute of it himself? Can it be, that He who is the souree of all the tenderness and compassion in the world,—that

He who is "Love" itself, and whose tender mercies are over all his works, is himself without this tenderness and compassion? Or "if such be the strength of this principle—the love of offspring, in our nature, how purely and how powerfully must it operate in Him, who tells us that the instinct which Himself has planted in our hearts, but feebly expresses the affection that is in His own breast to the family of mankind!"

The reception of the Holy Spirit has relation to our highest welfare. It concerns us, not in our fleshly interests, but in our spiritual, —not as mortal, but as imperishable. Without this blessing we may lead a low, animal life, "following the desires of the flesh and the mind," but we cannot attain to the dignity of our nature, or accomplish the ends of our creation, or secure the blissful destiny that invites us to its enjoyment. It is not as the perishable aliment that supports a decaying body. It is not as the light, which guides and cheers us in our business and pleasures, but which, how pleasant soever to behold, must soon fade away before the approaching shadows of the grave. It is not as the air which we breathe, and which surrounds us for our refreshment and subsistence, but which conveys to us diseases that must terminate our pilgrimage, just as certainly as it ministers to our sustentation. It involves our noblest interests. With it, life is an introduction to an endless felicity, without it, existence is but a turbid, agitated stream which is rapidly rolling on to merge itself in a cheerless eternity.

Can it, then, be, (for this is the reasoning of our Lord,) that He who knows that man liveth not by bread alone,—He who is the Father of your spirits,—He who blesses your bodies with the bounties of his providence,—He who has inclined your hearts to give your children what is requisite for their physical subsistence and personal comfort, and who not only scatters abundance over animated nature, but likewise adapts the supply to the variety of demands which exist, making "the grass to grow for the cattle, and the herb for the service of man," and feeding the young raven of the forest, and the buzzing bee of the garden, with food suited to them, and sufficient for them,—can it be that this bountiful and discriminating God will not give His Spirit, the great blessing which is needed by your rational, depraved, accountable, and immortal, nature?

The influence of the Spirit can never fail of being intrinsically and eternally good. This is not certainly known of any gift which a parent bestows upon his child. Because of his shortsightedness, he cannot tell with confidence what will be the effect or results of his munificence. The bread which he gives him for his nourishment, may be strengthening him for a life of dissipation, which shall roll back as a stone to the door of the grave of his once fondly cherished, but now withered and buried hopes. The fish which he gives him, may make him to feel

> "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
> To have a thankless child."

The egg which he places in his hand, may soon be displaced by a scorpion, to pain with its sting, and poison with its venom, both the

father and the son. The gifts, moreover, which a father confers upon his offspring, are personal, private benefits. They are limited in their advantage to the individuals receiving them. They are, in this respect, like the object which brought the widow to the unjust judge,—to be avenged of *her* adversary.

Now neither of these things is true of the Holy Spirit. However true it may be of other things, that they may or may not be ultimately beneficial, that they are either of a doubtful nature by the variableness of circumstances, or are rendered so by the propensity our corruption gives us to abuse them,—this cannot be predicated of the Holy Ghost. His influence, by its efficacy in subduing that corruption, is absolutely and invariably beneficial. It is for this reason that we are at liberty to pray for this influence unconditionally and without limit, as we are permitted to supplicate for nothing else, at the throne of grace. Besides, the bestowal of the Spirit does not terminate solely on the recipient, as to the benefit which it carries along with it. In proportion as a man is filled with the fulness of the Spirit, he is qualified for more extensive usefulness, he is a brighter exemplification of piety, he desires more ardently the promotion of the glory of God, and he labours more diligently for the establishment of His kingdom on earth.

How, then, (the argument runs,) can we doubt of God's willingness to give the Spirit, certain as He is that there is no possible risk in the bestowal, and knowing as He does, that such communication is as intimately blended with His own concernments, as with the profiting of the suppliant?

Willing, however, as God is to give His Spirit, this will be done, as the text affirms, "to them that ask Him." The description, it will be perceived, is general. Speaking of the children of earthly parents, it would have been natural for the Great Teacher to specify the children of God in connexion with the mention of His name. But this He did not do, and the design in pursuing this course, would surely seem to be, to prevent any being hindered from asking, by the fear of not belonging to the family of the Most High, and to make asking itself a ground of encouragement to every suppliant,—to make the inducement lie in *the act* rather than in the *relation*. It is precisely the same representation that is made in the preceding context, "Every one that asketh, receiveth."

What are the elements of the condition thus specified? In our Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria, he said to her, "If thou hadst known the gift of God, and who it is that said unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked, and he would have given thee living water." He traced her not asking to her not knowing, and her not receiving to her not asking. Many there are who die chargeable with the same ignorance. They know not the value of the Holy Ghost. They have no proper conception of his worth. To ask in such a state of mind, even if we could suppose any disposition to do so, would, of course, be useless. It is not in accordance with God's rule, to bestow favours where they are not valued, to give the Spirit where He is not appreciated. As a Physician, he thrusts not his skill or healing balm upon those who would despise them. There must be a readiness to prize the promised and proffered blessing. It is thus with us. We

eare not to lavish our benefactions on those who do not properly regard them. So is it with God. Though unmerited benignity is the principle from which His communications flow, yet does He, from regard to his majesty, withhold them until there is a preparation to receive them, by viewing them with proper estimation. The Spirit in His first communication is, indeed, imparted without this requisite, but this cannot be affirmed of his subsequent donations. "To him that hath shall be given."

Asking must be in the Redeemer's name. It is to man, not as an enemy, but as an object of God's compassion, and as redeemed by the shedding of blood, that the text is addressed. It is to man as graciously restored to all that he had lost, and as having a way into the holiest opened and consecrated for him, and boldness given him to enter it, that this encouraging assurance is given. But in whom is it that God is reconciling the world unto himself? Who is it that puts us again on the footing of favour and acceptance with our Creator and Judge? Who is it that holds the keys of the treasury of Heaven? Who is it that has sprinkled the mercy-seat, and made it accessible? Who is it that offers up the prayers of all saints, procures for them an audience, and obtains for them an answer? All these inquiries turn us to Him who was willing for our sakes to "become poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich," and on whom the Spirit descended in the form of a dove, as if to indicate the channel of all His subsequent communications. They direct us to Him—the blessed Mediator—whose merit is the only medium through which petitions can ascend or blessings come down, whose promise, as it is implied in the text, contributes no less to render it precious, than does the interesting light which it throws over the character of His Father and our Father, His God and our God, and whose own gracious assurance to us, is, "Whatsoever ye ask in my name, believing, ye shall receive."

Prayer for the Spirit must be importunate. We are apt to faint in our supplications, if not heard immediately. We become discouraged, and abandon our seeking. Satan whispers "What profit shall you have if you pray unto Him?" "Where is God thy Maker that giveth songs in the night?" and our faithless hearts sink under the suggestion. But God is pleased with importunity. We honour Him thus, by the estimation in which we show we are holding his blessing, and by the strong confidence which we indicate we are exercising in His covenant promise. Why would we ask, if we did not prize the favour solicited, and why would we persist, if we had not faith of final success? And this earnest entreaty will prevail, when that of an opposite kind would fail. It was to teach this precious truth, that Jesus uttered the parable of the friend at midnight, who, by repeated solicitations obtained the loaves which through mere friendship he never could have received, and the parable of the widow who met with success in her appeal, even to an "unjust judge," by her "continual coming." It was for the same reason, also, that He kept the Syro-Phœnician woman waiting, and waiting almost hopelessly, as far as His disposition was indicated, for the blessing which she sought. And God is still the same. He is pleased with our much asking, instead of wearied with it. He exhibits to us with joy his people as crying unto him day and night. Observe the

fulness and force of the expression: "crying,"—that is, fervently beseeching, "day and night," that is, continually, for these two periods in their alternate revolutions, make up the term of our earthly pilgrimage. Man's life should be one unintermitting prayer. He may not, indeed, and need not, always occupy the attitude of supplication, neither is He required to merge entirely the active duties of the station to which God has appointed him in services of devotion. His habitual frame of soul, however, even when not in the closet or sanctuary, should be one of felt dependence and desire in the direction of Heaven, ready, like the expanded flower, to receive the cheering light and refreshing shower, that will descend upon it from above. And why should not this posture of spirit be maintained? What is our career through the world but one of asking? In distress we seek for relief, in sickness, for restoration, and in ignorance, for information,—at every step of our progress we are seeking for supplies from sources beyond ourselves. Why should this tendency of our nature be perverted by being limited to things that perish in the using? Why should it be confined to the interests that are vanishing away? We find the right response to this inquiry, so apt to be forgotten amidst life's business and pleasures, when we turn to our condition as beings who by nature are in a state of moral bankruptcy, when we contemplate the manifold defects, infirmities, and necessities which the events of life develop, when we reflect upon our weakness and weigh our responsibility, and especially when we glance at the character of God, as it shines with subduing tenderness and attraction back of all that distrustful jealousy and that chilling suspicion with which we are prone to regard it, because of our alienation from Him through sin. Away with that false conception of God according to which, by reason of our self-condemnation, He is looked upon only as a Being who, from the height of his affronted majesty, looks down with the terrors of an offended countenance on the sinful world that is beneath Him! We must not think of Him as having an unwillingness to bless us, but as a God of love—whose paternal affection has made for itself a channel through which it can reach us, if by our unbelief and stubbornness we receive not His grace in vain. Oh, what is prayer, but the turning of the wandering prodigal to his father, and what is the sanction to pray, and to plead with importunity, but the father's saying of his alienated child, "This my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found." "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his finger, and shoes upon his feet, and bring forth the fatted calf, and let us eat and be merry!"

Not one soul on earth, we verily believe, should be cast down, because of the imperfectness with which he makes known his desires. When the family gathers around their Parent with their various requests, one able to express fully its wants, and another asking in broken phrases, and another able only to point and weep, that least one of all is not slighted because of its incompetency to give the desire which is ready to burst its little heart, a verbal utterance. Rather is it pitied the more because its latent longing can find no vehicle to bring it forth. "Sweet Babe," says the fond mother, "thou too art a child—thou too shalt succeed,—everything pleads for thee,—thy dimpled cheeks, thy

little hand, thy big shining tears." So, God, who is more willing to give than we are to receive, will not slight the feeblest suppliants at his footstool. They may but weep, but he will hear the voice of their weeping, their desire is before him, and their groaning is not hid from Him.

Not one soul, either, we are as firmly persuaded, that is trembling on the verge of heaven—receding in dimness and distance from a departing world, or shining and rising with fadeless lustre and with perfected powers, in the happy land, where the former things are passed away, will feel one pang of regret, for any time or energy that was devoted to the asking for the Spirit.

Oh, these are precious words on which we have been meditating! They are the words of Him who "knoweth the Father." The question they embody is left unanswered, as if the mind was to be left to any conception of God's willingness that it might choose to form. The assurance which they give us, has been dropt into the main channel of our life, and blended by association with one of the tenderest of our relations, that it may be present to our minds, as we gather with our loved ones around the domestic board. Faithfulness, then, to our high and holy privilege is demanded of us both by interest and duty. The more of the Spirit's presence we have on earth, the more exalted and ecstatic will be our bliss in the Paradise of God.